

VZCZCXRO0263
PP RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHROV RUEHSR
DE RUEHSL #0101/01 0391703
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 081703Z FEB 06
FM AMEMBASSY BRATISLAVA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9503
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BRATISLAVA 000101

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/NCE AND S/ES-O
NSC FOR DAMON WILSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/08/2021
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [SOCI](#) [LO](#)
SUBJECT: SLOVAK POLITICAL PARTIES FACE REALITY OF JUNE
ELECTIONS

REF: A. BRATISLAVA 0099
[1](#)B. BRATISLAVA 0100

Classified By: Ambassador Rodolphe M. Vallee for Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Upon the announcement of a proposed June 17 date for early elections, Slovak politicians toned down their rhetoric, moved away from plans to go after PM Dzurinda in a recall vote and instead started gearing up for the impending campaign. The general consensus, even among opposition Smer and HZDS parties, is that the PM's handling of KDH was political "genius" and that KDH miscalculated expecting the PM to make concessions of the KDH-proposed "conscientious objector" agreement in order to avoid early elections. At the same time, the resignation of Chairman of parliament (and KDH boss) Pavol Hrusovsky left Vice-Chair Bela Bugar of the Hungarian Coalition Party SMK in "control" of the council, raising the ethnic issue to the political stage. Smer chairman Robert Fico -- speaking on camera -- announced that no Hungarian will ever lead the Slovak parliament. END SUMMARY.

DZURINDA OUT ON TOP, AVOIDS WORKING WITH HZDS

[1](#)2. (C) In the aftermath of the February 7 withdrawal of KDH from the governing coalition, politicians from across the political spectrum -- including several from opposition parties long at odds with SDKU and Prime Minister Dzurinda -- have quietly expressed admiration of the PM's handling of the situation. Smer MP Jozef Bucek told us that the events of the past few days have been "genius" by Dzurinda, in that he managed to "catch KDH in its own trap." Bucek told us that he does not like Dzurinda, "but he is a great political gambler."

[1](#)3. (C) SDKU MP Ferdinand Devinsky told us that as the situation moves forward, Dzurinda and SDKU will benefit at KDH's expense. Devinsky said that the KDH departure was not predicated by Hrusovsky, who tended to be more "flexible," but instead was brought about by the religiously conservative "KDH Taliban" led by former Minister of Interior Vladimir Palko. Dzurinda is happy, he said, to avoid having to rely on HZDS votes in the final months of governance leading up to the elections and thus to avoid creating debts to HZDS that the PM would have to pay back in a future coalition. By moving elections up, Dzurinda avoided having to cooperate with "undesirable" parties like HZDS to stay afloat until September.

FICO BLANCHES AT POSSIBILITY OF POWER?

14. (C) Smer's Bucek told us in confidence that, due to the dissolution of the coalition, the party's high polling numbers (which hover in the low-30's) and the accelerated election timeframe, chairman Robert Fico has started to face the reality that he may, indeed, become Prime Minister. Bucek confided his opinion that Fico felt a touch of fear at the prospect of such responsibility. The transition from critic to PM, Bucek says, may have Fico "concerned." However, Bucek told us that Smer continues to consider parties it could work with in the future, telling us that Communist Party KSS and nationalist party SNS are not being considered, and that HZDS is also becoming a less likely partner. Smer, which was actively engaged in a Dzurinda recall effort on February 7, decided by the afternoon of February 8 to drop the campaign against Dzurinda... for now.

PARTIES AGREE: NO HUNGARIAN CHAIR OF PARLIAMENT

15. (C) In a February 8 meeting, HZDS Deputy Chairman Milan Urbani told us that HZDS will not participate in any anti-Dzurinda recall efforts, as it needs to focus on its own campaign in advance of June elections. HZDS is convinced Dzurinda will again be the deal-maker after June 17, and wants to stay on his good side. Urbani confided that within the parliament, no "Slovak" party is willing to vote for SMK leader Bela Bugar to become Chairman, a sentiment which Fico voiced loudly February 7 when he told a television reporter on camera that no Hungarian should ever lead the Slovak parliament.

HZDS SEEKS U.S. BLESSING

BRATISLAVA 00000101 002 OF 002

16. (C) As part of HZDS' internal pre-election focus, Urbani told us he wants the U.S. to "send a signal" to SMK and KDH that HZDS would be an "acceptable" coalition party, as he claims that they refuse to work with HZDS because of U.S. censure. We told Urbani that we will do no such thing, and that HZDS cannot blame the U.S. for its own past acts.

SDKU-SMER COOPERATION MORE LIKELY

17. (C) SDKU's Devinsky told us that he thinks KDH will "never forgive" Dzurinda for defecting to establish SDKU over seven years ago, and that the recent dissolution will only further poison the well. He thinks it would be impossible for SDKU to work with KDH in the future, but told us that he would not rule out a SDKU-Smer partnership. Bucek did not deny the possibility either, but noted that it would be much easier if the personality conflict between Dzurinda and Fico was not an issue. Bucek said that Dzurinda once called Fico a "misfit" in his presence, which Bucek felt was insulting to the Smer party in its entirety and evident of the deep discord between the two.

COMMENT

18. (C) Whatever SDKU's success in besting KDH in recent days, the fact remains that (except for SMK) each of PM Dzurinda's stable of potential future coalition partners has a strong vein of personal animosity toward the PM, which will make any dealmaking a challenge for him if his party performs well in the June elections.
VALLEE